

## ***Luftwaffe Anti-Partisan Operations in France, June – September 1944***

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### **To do**

- contact H. L. deZeng about G. J. Thomas manuscript
- Beale article in *Luftwaffe Verband*
- Thomas book, KG 200
- Translate Diot article
- check BA-MA RL 8/80

### **Introduction**

A little-known aspect of the air war of World War II was the Luftwaffe operations against the French Resistance in the aftermath of the Allied invasion. A bitter ground war was fought in central and southern France, with German air units also participating. A number of Luftwaffe units were involved, but the most important was *Geschwader Bongart*.

*Geschwader Bongart* was a dedicated anti-partisan unit that operated a variety of German and Italian aircraft in France in 1944. The FW 190s of 10./Z.G. 1 [see [my other article](#)] were attached to *Geschwader Bongart* on 11 June 1944, along with the rest of Z.G. 1. *Geschwader Bongart* and its attached elements operated a great variety of aircraft, including Re 2002s, Ju 88s, FW 190s, He 111s, Bf 110s, Go 145s, He 46s, FW 58s, and SM 200s (probably Saiman 200s, Italian biplanes).<sup>1</sup> *Geschwader Bongart* was formed in April 1944 and from May 1944 flew in regions known for heavy partisan activity, namely Lyon, Valence (90 km S. of Lyon), Clermont-Ferrand (130 km W. of Lyon), Avord (220 km N.W. of Lyon) and Bourges (235 km N.W. of Lyon). After the Allied landings in the south of France on 15 August 1944, *Geschwader Bongart* was forced to move northwards, joining the retreat from France before being disbanded in September 1944. Little is known of the role played by the 10./Z.G. 1 FW 190s with *Geschwader Bongart*.

### **III./Schlachtgeschwader 4**

Before its involvement in anti-partisan operations in June 1944 in France, III./S.G. 4 was one of the most experienced *Jabogruppen* in the *Luftwaffe*. Formed as III./Z.G. 2 in April 1942, it flew the Bf 109 on the Eastern Front, before withdrawing in summer 1942 to convert to the FW 190 in the West. In October and November 1942 it flew some missions on the Channel Front, and then moved to Tunisia in November 1942. In December 1942 it became III./S.K.G. 10, and flew from bases in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, until withdrawing from operations in September 1943. After rest and refitting it flew U-boat escort, and then flew missions in the early days of the invasion of Normandy. It had FW 190 A-6s and A-7/R6s on strength, equipped with a single bomb rack under the fuselage.

### **II./Kampfgeschwader 100**

II./K.G. 100 was a German twin-engine bomber unit.

### **Creation of *Geschwader Bongart***

*Geschwader Bongart* was created from the III. and IV. *Gruppen* of *Fliegerzielgeschwader 2* (Fl.Z.G. 2) in mid-April 1944. Fl.Z.G. 2 had been created in February 1944, and operated under

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<sup>1</sup> N. Beale & H.L. deZeng, 'Geschwader Bongart' in B.C. Rosch (ed.), *Luftwaffe Verband #19*, July 1999, p.16; information about Saiman 200 via G. Bussi

*Luftflotte 3*, helping German anti-aircraft units with their training by towing targets. This unit received most of the Re 2002s built for the *Luftwaffe* in the Reggiane and Caproni factories.<sup>2</sup>

In spring 1944 the Allied invasion was drawing closer, and the intensity of Resistance activity increased in central France increased. Thus, Hermann-Josef Freiherr von dem Bongart was ordered to move the *Stab Fl.Z.G. 2* to Bourges on 15 April 1944. With the III. and IV. *Gruppen* of *Fl.Z.G. 2* he was ordered to begin anti-partisan operations in the area under the designation of *Geschwader Bongart*.<sup>3</sup>

The *Stab* of *Geschwader Bongart* was formed in April 1944 at Charleville (100 km E. of Paris). I. *Gruppe* of *Geschwader Bongart* was formed at the same time and place, with the *Gruppenstab* from *Stab III./Fl.Z.G. 2*, and 1.-3./*Bongart* from 7.-9./*Fl.Z.G. 2*. II. *Gruppe* was also formed at Charleville in April 1944, with the *Stab II./Bongart* from *Stab IV./Fl.Z.G. 2*, and 4.-7./*Bongart* from 10.-13./*Fl.Z.G. 2*.<sup>4</sup>

### **Unit Operations – June 1944 to September 1944**

*Geschwader Bongart* flew operations from Lyon-Bron, Bourges, Valence, Clermont Ferrand and Avord (20 km E.S.E. of Bourges).<sup>5</sup> Operations commenced in the second half of May 1944, and continued in central and south-eastern France until mid-August 1944.<sup>6</sup> During that time, the unit proved quite successful.

#### **7 June 1944**

During the day, *Geschwader Bongart*, based at Bourges, was in communication with 10./*Fl.Z.G. 2* in southern France.<sup>7</sup>

#### **8 June 1944**

*Geschwader Bongart* was placed on the *Luftflotte 3* distribution list.<sup>8</sup>

#### **9 June 1944**

At midday, the Bourges-based *Geschwader Bongart* was informed of partisans collecting near Maréges (71 km W.S.W. of Clermont-Ferrand). A dam was protected by weak anti-aircraft defences. There is a dam five kilometres west of Maréges, and it is presumably the one referred to in this signal. *Luftflotte 3* ordered reconnaissance and offensive operations if necessary.<sup>9</sup>

#### **10 June 1944**

No entries.

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<sup>2</sup> ULTRA KV 7346; Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17; H.W. Neulen, *The Rich Booty: Italian Aircraft in Luftwaffe Service*, Milano, 2000, p.48

<sup>3</sup> Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17; the old designation continued to be used alongside the new one.

<sup>4</sup> M. Holm, *Geschwader Bongart*, <http://www.wv2.dk/air/misc/bongart.htm>; B.C. Rosch, *Luftwaffe Codes, Markings & Units 1939 – 1945*, Atglen, 1995, p.181

<sup>5</sup> via Beale

<sup>6</sup> Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17

<sup>7</sup> ULTRA KV 7346

<sup>8</sup> ULTRA KV 7346

<sup>9</sup> ULTRA KV 7346

### 11 June 1944

Late on this day Z.G. 1 was subordinated to *Geschwader Bongart*, and was ordered to go immediately with ground personnel to Bourges.<sup>10</sup> [need KV 7512 - AA]

**Table 1: Z.G. 1 on subordination to *Geschwader Bongart*, evening**<sup>11</sup>

Aircraft	Crews
26 (12)	39 (18)

### 12 June 1944

No entries.

### 13 June 1944

No entries.

### 14 June 1944

No entries.

### 15 June 1944

No entries.

### 16 June 1944

On this day Re 2002 W.Nr 1256 'Red 5 + ' of *Geschwader Bongart* was lost in action against the Resistance in southern France, at Amboiras (250 km W. of Lyon, 30 km S.E. of Limoges).<sup>12</sup>

### 17 June 1944

No entries.

### 18 June 1944

No entries.

### 19 June 1944

III./S.G. 4 transferred from Laval to Clermont-Ferrand via Tours. Poor weather prevented some aircraft making the flight.<sup>13</sup>

### 20 June 1944

*Major* Weyert, *Kommandeur* of III./S.G. 4, flew from Villacoublay to Bourges to meet with *Oberst* Bongart. Weyert then flew on to join his *Gruppe* at Clermont-Ferrand. III./S.G. 4 was now subordinated to the *Geschwader Bongart*. 19 FW 190s were now based at Clermont-Ferrand, but III./S.G. 4 reported that the airfield was too small, with only thirteen blast bays.<sup>14</sup>

### 21 June 1944

III./S.G. 4 looked for a place to disperse its aircraft near Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> NA AIR40/2687 "Summaries" T./212/230; ULTRA KV 7640

<sup>11</sup> ULTRA KV 7640

<sup>12</sup> Neulen, *The Rich Booty*, p.52; in December 2004 this aircraft was at Le Bourget for restoration; P. Cannone, Email 5 December 2004

<sup>13</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>14</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>15</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

## 22 June 1944

The *Stab* of III./S.G. 4 moved to quarters in Royat, and the 7., 8. and 9./S.G. 4 moved to villages around Clermont-Ferrand, or moved into Clermont-Ferrand itself. Airfields at Avord and Saint Lau (possibly Saint-Laure, 20 km N.E. Clermont-Ferrand) were both rejected as alternative airfields by the *Gruppe* for various reasons.<sup>16</sup>

At 12:00 fourteen III./S.G. 4 aircraft flew a mission against a “*Partisanendörfer*”, partisan village, south of Valence.<sup>17</sup>

## 23 June 1944

III./S.G. 4 had 49 aircraft at its airfield.<sup>18</sup>

## 24 June 1944

The transfer of 10./Fl.Z.G. 2 to Luxeil (250 km N.N.E. of Lyon) was mentioned on this day.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 2: *Geschwader Bongart* Aircraft Strengths**<sup>20</sup>

Type	Aircraft
Re 2002	35 (22)
Junkers W.34	7 (4)
Ju 88	6 (3)
Bf 109	5 (2)
He 46	4 (2)
Bf 110	4 (0)
He 111	3 (1)
Fi 156	2 (2)
Do 217	1 (0)

9./S.G. 4 transferred to Avord with seven aircraft, even though the airfield was not entirely suitable.<sup>21</sup>

## 25 June 1944

III./S.G. 4 was at two hours readiness for operations. It reported a bombing raid on Avord, but no 9./S.G. 4 aircraft were damaged.<sup>22</sup>

## 26 June 1944

In the early morning twelve III./S.G. 4 aircraft led by *Hptm.* Dedekind flew from Clermont-Ferrand to Conches, but were intercepted by enemy fighters and landed instead at Villacoublay. One crashed due to damage at Conches.<sup>23</sup>

## 27 June 1944

Bad weather prevented planned III./S.G. 4 operations, so instead the *Gruppe* rested.<sup>24</sup>

## 28 June 1944

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<sup>16</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>17</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>18</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>19</sup> ULTRA KV 9591

<sup>20</sup> Beale & deZeng, ‘*Geschwader Bongart*’, p.17

<sup>21</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>22</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>23</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>24</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

At 09:15 seven III./S.G. 4 FW 190s flew an anti-partisan operation to the Valence area. From 16:00 the *Gruppe* was at two hours readiness, then from 20:00 it stood down.<sup>25</sup>

### 29 June 1944

III./S.G. 4 flew two missions and 24 sorties against partisans in the Valence area. After the second mission they had to land at Valence due to bad weather.<sup>26</sup>

In the morning, *Oberst* Freiherr von dem Bongart requested that he be left a *Staffel* if III./S.G. 4 was to be transferred away.<sup>27</sup>

During the day, Fourth [*Gruppe* or *Staffel*?] *Geschwader Bongart* at Chateauroux was in communication with 10./Fl.Z.G. 2 at Aix Lenfant (Aix-la-Fayette is 45 km S.E. of Clermont-Ferrand).<sup>28</sup>

### 30 June 1944

In the afternoon III./S.G. 4 was ordered to transfer to the Eastern Front, beginning on 1 July. It was to come under the control of *Luftflotte* 1 on the northern sector of the front.<sup>29</sup>

In total, III./S.G. 4 flew five missions and 59 sorties against the Resistance. Bombs were accurately dropped on the following French villages: Beaufort, Plan de Baix, Le Chappel-en-Vercors, La Vacherie, ..., Lozerou, La Rouchette, Vincent, Saint Nazaire-en-Royans, Saint-Jean-de-Royans, Pont-en-Royans and two others.<sup>30</sup>

### July 1944

During this month German aircraft bombed a Resistance barracks in central France, and a railway station, and these attacks probably involved *Geschwader Bongart*.<sup>31</sup>

*Geschwader Bongart* only flew by day during the month, and undertook 482 sorties in total.<sup>32</sup>

### 1 July 1944

No entries.

### 2 July 1944

*Geschwader Bongart* flew two daytime sorties.<sup>33</sup>

### 3 July 1944

On this day there were serious German operations against the Resistance in the Clermont-Ferrand area.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>26</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>27</sup> BA-MA RL 10/358, III./S.G. 4 *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. 3; ULTRA XL 280

<sup>28</sup> ULTRA XL 385; Holm says 4./*Bongart* came from 10./Fl.Z.G.2.

<sup>29</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>30</sup> BA-MA RL 10/357

<sup>31</sup> P. Canonne, Email 20 October 2004

<sup>32</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>33</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>34</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.10; AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte* 3 (France), July 1944, p.5

During the night a German aircraft was reported to have bombed Landes-le-Gaulois, a village just north-west of Blois. The action occurred just after the Germans discovered one of their soldiers in a nearby village. The closest German airfield at Le Breuil was unserviceable at this time, having been ploughed up by forced labour peasants under the direction of the Germans.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4 July 1944

On the fourth and fifth the Germans were fighting with the Resistance in the Bourges area, and *Luftwaffe* aircraft were involved.<sup>36</sup>

*Geschwader Bongart* flew only one sortie.<sup>37</sup>

#### 5 July 1944

The *Fliegerverbindungsoffizier (Flivo)* of Army Group G requested the assignment of a *Flivo* for a special undertaking planned with support from *Geschwader Bongart*.<sup>38</sup>

On this day three German bombers were destroyed at Chateauroux airfield. It is unknown which unit they were from.<sup>39</sup>

There were large-scale German operations against the Resistance in the St. Claude area [which St. Claude?]. 31 *Luftwaffe* sorties were flown against the resistance. *Geschwader Bongart* flew no sorties on the fifth.<sup>40</sup>

*Geschwader Bongart* lost two aircraft on this day.<sup>41</sup>

#### 6 July 1944

24 sorties were flown by *Geschwader Bongart*.<sup>42</sup>

#### 7 July 1944

*Geschwader Bongart* flew no sorties.<sup>43</sup>

#### 8 July 1944

*Geschwader Bongart* was asked to do something quickly about the enemy airfield at Vassieux-en-Vercors, 16 km north of Die (100 km S.S.E. of Lyon).<sup>44</sup>

The *Geschwader Bongart* flew six sorties during the day, but further details are not known.<sup>45</sup>

#### 9 July 1944

Nine Re 2002s of *Geschwader Bongart* flew a mission against the Resistance towards the evening. The unit flew a total of twelve sorties during the day.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> P. Canonne, Letter 17 December 2004; G. Diot, 'Bombardement de Landes-le-Gaulois, 3 Juillet 1944'

<sup>36</sup> P. Canonne, Email 20 October 2004

<sup>37</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>38</sup> ULTRA XL 1055

<sup>39</sup> P. Canonne, Email 20 October 2004

<sup>40</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.11, 39 & 47

<sup>41</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.48

<sup>42</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.39

<sup>43</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>44</sup> ULTRA XL 1277

<sup>45</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>46</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.40 & 47

**Table 3: *Geschwader Bongart* Strengths** <sup>47</sup>

<i>Staffel</i>	<i>Aircraft</i>
11./Fl.Z.G. 2	20 (10)
12./Fl.Z.G. 2	29 (19)

**10 July 1944**

8./Fl.Z.G. 2 sent FW 190 A-8 W.Nr 170 407 to the repair facility at Auxerre.<sup>48</sup>

*Geschwader Bongart* flew just one sortie.<sup>49</sup>

**11 July 1944**

*Geschwader Bongart* aircraft flew 45 sorties, undertaking weather, defensive and armed reconnaissance, as well as attacks on the Resistance.<sup>50</sup>

**12 July 1944**

28 aircraft of *Geschwader Bongart* flew weather and defensive reconnaissance. Four aircraft from II./K.G. 100 also flew against the resistance. *Geschwader Bongart* flew a total of 35 sorties.<sup>51</sup>

**13 July 1944**

The Germans reported that there were many instances of railway tracks and bridges being blown up by the Resistance in the Chateauroux, Limoges and Montlucon areas.<sup>52</sup>

*Geschwader Bongart* flew 28 sorties against the Resistance.<sup>53</sup>

**14 July 1944**

100 supply containers were dropped to the Resistance to the east of Valence.<sup>54</sup>

*Geschwader Bongart* and 2. *Flieger-Division* flew 27 anti-partisan sorties. *Geschwader Bongart* was responsible for 19 of those.<sup>55</sup>

**15 July 1944**

X. *Fliegerkorps* provided two anti-partisan sorties. *Geschwader Bongart* flew patrols and dropped bombs on the Resistance in the Vassieux-en-Vercors – La Chapelle-en-Vercors area, flying twelve sorties.<sup>56</sup>

**16 July 1944**

In the Limoges area railway tracks, bridges and roads were all blown up by the Resistance. In return, 500 of the Maquis were reported killed by the Germans.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> ULTRA XL 1522

<sup>48</sup> NA AIR 40/1887

<sup>49</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>50</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.40 & 47

<sup>51</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.40 & 47

<sup>52</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte 3* (France), July 1944, p.19

<sup>53</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.41 & 47

<sup>54</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, p.4

<sup>55</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.41 & 47

<sup>56</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.41

<sup>57</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte 3* (France), July 1944, p.23

*Geschwader Bongart* flew ten anti-partisan sorties.<sup>58</sup>

#### 17 July 1944

X. *Fliegerkorps* flew three sorties against the Resistance, and *Geschwader Bongart* flew 17.<sup>59</sup>

#### 18 July 1944

*Geschwader Bongart* flew four sorties against the Resistance, attacking a troop concentration and an ammunition dump.<sup>60</sup>

#### 19 July 1944

Nine *Geschwader Bongart* aircraft flew operations, attacking a Resistance headquarters, an ammunition dump and billets, with good results.<sup>61</sup>

#### 20 July 1944

X. *Fliegerkorps* provided five aircraft for operations against the Resistance. *Geschwader Bongart* flew four anti-partisan sorties.<sup>62</sup>

#### Operations against the Vercors Plateau

During July 1944 *Geschwader Bongart* took part in a major operation against some 10,000 mobilized French partisans on the Vercors Plateau, south of Grenoble (90 km S.E. of Lyon). The Resistance position threatened German supply lines, so paratroops, Russian volunteers, mountain troops from the army's 157. *Reserve Division*, and *Geschwader Bongart*, were all used to attack them. The partisans were surrounded and destroyed in a combined operation by air and land forces, and combat was heaviest between 21 and 26 July 1944.<sup>63</sup>

#### 21 July 1944

*Luftflotte* 3 reported that the combined German army-air force operation against the Resistance began on this day in the area east of Valence. Aircraft from *Geschwader Bongart* provided cover for 22 gliders that landed on the massif south of Grenoble. The German battle group was reported to have taken up a hedgehog position at Vassieux-en-Vercors, but the day's objective was not reached due to strong enemy resistance. Re 2002 fighter-bombers, along with other *Luftwaffe* aircraft, dropped a total of 7.5 tons of bombs. Fourteen aircraft of the *Jagdfliegerführer Süd* flew operations to the area south-east of Valence, while *Geschwader Bongart* contributed 44 sorties.<sup>64</sup>

#### 22 July 1944

Another 7.5 tons of bombs were dropped on the Resistance at Vercors. *Luftwaffe* aircraft provided support, flying operations against Resistance groups east of Valence. The road eight kilometres north of Die was blocked by three bomb hits. Supplies were also brought in to the hedgehog position at Vassieux-en-Vercors. The Germans were carrying out mopping up operations in the areas of Bouganeuf, Ussel, Limoges and Chateauroux.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.42 & 47

<sup>59</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.41 & 47

<sup>60</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.42

<sup>61</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.43 & 47

<sup>62</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.43 & 47

<sup>63</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.43; Beale & deZeng, 'Geschwader Bongart', p.17; Neulen, *The Rich Booty*, p.51; the figure of 10,000 may be exaggerated.

<sup>64</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte* 3 Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.43; AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte* 3 (France), July 1944, pp.28-29; Beale & deZeng, 'Geschwader Bongart', p.17



*Geschwader Bongart* flew 68 sorties, and the *Jafü Süd* flew 17 sorties in support of the *157. Reserve Division*. Air cover, army support and supply missions were flown.<sup>66</sup>

### 23 July 1944

Ten tons of high explosive bombs were dropped, and German aircraft took part in the Vercors operation. *Luftflotte 3* reported that the operation south-east of Lyon was proceeding to plan. The troops had now reached Vassieux-en-Vercors, about 100 km south-south-east of Lyon, despite strong opposition from the Resistance.<sup>67</sup>

On this day *Geschwader Bongart* flew 63 anti-partisan sorties, while *Jafü Süd* flew six.<sup>68</sup>

### 24 July 1944

Action continued against the French resistance on the Vercors plateau. *Geschwader Bongart* flew 20 sorties. 16 were against the Resistance, while four were for supply missions and rescuing the wounded.<sup>69</sup>

At 12:30 bombers of the USAAF XV Bomber Command attacked Valence airfield. St. Martin de Crau airfield near Marseille was also hit. The taxiing area, guns and aircraft at Valence were hit. 24 aircraft were badly damaged or destroyed on the ground. Fuel and ammunition was destroyed, and communications were put out of action. 18 aircraft of the *Jafü Süd* intercepted the American raid.<sup>70</sup>

### 25 July 1944

In the night of 24/25 July high-explosive bombs were dropped on Valence airfield, hitting the taxiing area, and telephone and high-tension lines.<sup>71</sup>

*Geschwader Bongart* flew 32 sorties against the Resistance. By this stage enemy resistance had weakened, and *Luftflotte 3* went as far as to say that the enemy resistance had collapsed, after heavy fighting during this day. Mopping up operations were now undertaken by the Germans.<sup>72</sup>

### 26 July 1944

*Geschwader Bongart* flew 18 sorties against partisans at Vercors, supporting the *157. Reserve Division* and *Kampfgruppe Schäfer*. The operation concluded successfully on this day, with the Germans reporting many Resistance fighters killed, along with much ammunition and many weapons captured.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte 3* (France), July 1944, p.30; Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17

<sup>66</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.44

<sup>67</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte 3* (France), July 1944, p.31; Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17

<sup>68</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.44

<sup>69</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.44; Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17

<sup>70</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.36

<sup>71</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.36

<sup>72</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte 3* (France), July 1944, p.36; Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17

<sup>73</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.23; AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte 3* (France), July 1944, p.36; Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17

Valence airfield was attacked by Allied aircraft, with five Ju 88s and one Do 17 destroyed.<sup>74</sup>

*Luftflotte 3* noted that the “attacks on Valence airfield during the last few days [were] presumably aimed at *Geschwader Bongart* based there for operations against partisan groups.”<sup>75</sup>

#### 27 July 1944

Only three sorties were flown by *Geschwader Bongart*, this time to the Beaujeu area (50 km N.N.W. of Lyon).<sup>76</sup>

#### 28 July 1944

No sorties were undertaken by the *Geschwader Bongart*.<sup>77</sup>

#### 29 July 1944

Two aircraft of *Geschwader Bongart* flew reconnaissance and attacks against the Resistance.<sup>78</sup>

#### 30 July 1944

*Geschwader Bongart* flew no sorties during the day.<sup>79</sup>

#### 31 July 1944

The *Jafü Süd* flew twelve sorties against the Resistance, while the *Geschwader Bongart* flew only two.<sup>80</sup>

#### August 1944

During the month German aircraft bombed a railway station in central France.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately no details about the operations of *Geschwader Bongart* in August are known.

#### 8 August 1944

**Table 4: *Geschwader Bongart* Aircraft Strengths**

Type	Aircraft
Fighter-bombers	32 (14)
Bombers	18 (4)
Others	70 (31)

#### 4 September 1944

*Geschwader Bongart* was disbanded at Luxeil. After the Allied landings in southern France in August, the *Geschwader* could no longer operate due to the total Allied air superiority over all of France. Thus, following orders by the *Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe* on 3 September 1944, the *Stab*, III., and IV./Fl.Z.G. 2 were disbanded. This was the end of *Geschwader Bongart*.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>74</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, pp.7 & 36

<sup>75</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 127, Situation Reports Issued by *Luftflotte 3* (France), July 1944, p.31

<sup>76</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.45

<sup>77</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>78</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.46

<sup>79</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.47

<sup>80</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 68, *Luftflotte 3* Calendar of Operations, July 1944, p.46

<sup>81</sup> P. Canonne, Email 20 October 2004

<sup>82</sup> AWM 54 423/4/103 Part 118, War Diary of *Luftflotte 3* (Western Front), September 1944, p.9; Beale & deZeng, ‘*Geschwader Bongart*’, p.17; via Beale; Neulen, *The Rich Booty*, pp.51-52; Rosch, *Luftwaffe Codes, Markings & Units*, pp.181 & 183-184; the disbandment order appears in the *Luftflotte 3* war diary on 6 September 1944

### **A Biography of Hermann-Josef Freiherr von dem Bongart**

*Oberstleutnant* Hermann-Josef Freiherr von dem Bongart led IV./K.G. 55 from 10 June 1941 to 1 September 1941, before moving to III./K.G. 55 and leading it for a year. During 1943 he joined the staff of *Luftflotte 3* as the *Offizier für Sonderaufträge* (special projects officer). In spring 1944 he was ordered to create a unit to conduct anti-partisan operations, and this would be known as *Geschwader Bongart*. *Oberst* Bongart controlled this unit from April 1944 to September 1944. After the disbandment of his unit in September 1944, *Oberstleutnant* Bongart became *Kommandant* of Neumünster airfield in Schleswig-Holstein. He passed away on 21 December 1952.<sup>83</sup>

### **Conclusion**

*Geschwader Bongart* had served its purpose, but by early September 1944 it had become obsolete, because with the loss of France the Germans did not need an anti-partisan unit in the West. *Geschwader Bongart* was kept very busy in the aftermath of the Allied landings in Normandy, and with assistance from a few other *Luftwaffe* units it provided the German ground forces fighting the Resistance with strong air support, flying patrols, bombing and transport missions.

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<sup>83</sup> Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17; M. Holm, KG55, <http://www.ww2.dk/air/kampf/kg55.htm>; Holm, *Geschwader Bongart*, <http://www.ww2.dk/air/misc/bongart.htm>; Roba, '*Sonderkommando Bongart*', p.19

### The Reggiane 2002 with *Geschwader Bongart*

Around 30 Re 2002s were operated by *Geschwader Bongart*, but it was a difficult aircraft to keep serviceable. By 31 May 1944, *Geschwader Bongart* had 18 Re 2002s on strength, and a month later there were 35 in total, with 22 serviceable. The Germans had seized *Regia Aeronautica* Re 2002s, including ten from 50<sup>o</sup> *Stormo*, and these were amongst the aircraft operated by *Geschwader Bongart*. Others came from Italian factories.<sup>84</sup>

A surviving Re 2002 of *Geschwader Bongart* is on display at the *Musée de la Résistance* in Limoges (140 km W. of Clermont Ferrand).<sup>85</sup>

Type	W.Nr	Stkz.	Markings	Remarks, Camouflage & Markings	Source
Re 2002	1222	?	?	Olive-green/duck egg blue mottled scheme	Beale & deZeng, p.17
Re 2002	1256	?	?	Force-landing 16.06.44	Neulen, p.74
Re 2002	4607	DV + BE	?	Olive-green/duck egg blue mottled scheme	Beale & deZeng, p.17
Re 2002	4611	DV + BI	'Red 5 + '	Yellow fuselage band	Profile via M. Murphy
Re 2002	?	BN + YB	'Black 2 + '	Abandoned at Valance; yellow fuselage band	Roba, p.19 photo; Beale & deZeng, p.17 J. Crow photo
Re 2002	?	?	'White 7 + '	Abandoned at Valance; yellow fuselage band	Roba, p.19 photo; Beale & deZeng, p.17 J. Crow photo
Re 2002	?	?	?	Abandoned, possibly at Etampes	Roba, <i>op.cit.</i> , p.19 photo
Re 2002 <sup>86</sup>	?	DN + VS	'2 + '	Abandoned at Valance; yellow fuselage band	Beale & deZeng, p.16 J. Crow photo
Re 2002	?	?	?	Valance; yellow rudder, no wing splinter scheme	Beale & deZeng, p.17 J. Crow photo
Re 2002	?	?	?	Valance; splinter camouflage on upper wings	Beale & deZeng, p.17 J. Crow photo
Re 2002	?	?	?	Valance	Beale & deZeng, p.16 J. Crow photo
Re 2002	?	DV +	'5 + '	Yellow fuselage band	<a href="#">Luftwaffe Experten Message Board</a> photo

<sup>84</sup> Beale & deZeng, '*Geschwader Bongart*', p.17; Neulen, *The Rich Booty*, pp.47-48; Roba, '*Sonderkommando Bongart*', p.19

<sup>85</sup> Neulen, *The Rich Booty*, p.52

<sup>86</sup> I'm not sure if this is BN + YB – a photo of a Re 2002 with DN + is belly-landed, while a photo of 'Y + ' exists with the aircraft in good condition

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Beale N. & deZeng, H.L. ‘*Geschwader Bongart*’ in Rosch, B.C. (ed.) *Luftwaffe Verband #19*, July 1999, pp.16-18

Written in response to Jean-Louis Roba’s queries about *Geschwader Bongart* in an earlier issue of the *Luftwaffe Verband* (see below), Nick Beale and Larry deZeng provided some good information. Accompanying their comments were five photos of *Geschwader Bongart* Re 2002s provided by Jim Crow. Nick wrote about the various aircraft operated by *Geschwader Bongart*, described the formation of the unit, included some strength reports, and mentioned some details of Allied reports on captured Re 2002s. Larry deZeng provided a detailed overview of *Geschwader Bongart*, including its formation, the unit’s commander, operations, strength reports, and disbandment in early September 1944. Finally, he gives a nice summary of available archival sources.

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Diot, G. ‘*Bombardement de Landes-le-Gaulois, 3 Juillet 1944*’

In French, an account of the bombing of Landes-le-Gaulois on 3 July 1944.

Neulen, H.W. *The Rich Booty: Italian Aircraft in Luftwaffe Service*, Giorgio Apostolo Editore, Milano, 2000.

This book is in Italian and English (titled *Il Ricco Bottino ‘Aerei Italiani nella Luftwaffe’* in Italian), and is a good source for Italian aircraft in the hands of the *Luftwaffe*. The section covering operations by *Geschwader Bongart* is from page 47 to page 51, and there is one loss entry on page 74. A number of photos are included, and a good summary of the history of *Geschwader Bongart* is included.

Roba, J-L. “*Sonderkommando Bongart*” in Rosch, B.C. (ed.) *Luftwaffe Verband* #18, July 1999, p.19

Jean-Louis gives a brief summary of what he knows about *Geschwader Bongart* and its activities. He then goes on to give a short biography of Hermann-Josef Freiherr von dem Bongart.

Rosch, B.C. *Luftwaffe Codes, Markings & Units 1939 – 1945*, Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, 1995, ISBN 0-88740-796-X

Rosch’s book is a fantastic resource for those interested in the histories of the smaller and lesser-known *Luftwaffe* units. Rosch provides details like formation and disbandment dates, *Feldpostnummern*, types of aircraft operated, codes, along with photos and profiles throughout. The sections on 5./B.F.Gr. 196, 1./S.A.Gr. 128 and *Geschwader Bongart* are quite valuable, and there are a number of photographs of aircraft operated by 5./B.F.Gr. 196 (unfortunately there are no shots of FW 190s). Pages relevant to this article include pp.50, 85-86, 152, 181, 183-184 and 328.

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#### **Photographs**

Crow, J.V. five photos of *Geschwader Bongart* Re 2002s on airfields around Lyons, in Rosch, B.C. (ed.) *Luftwaffe Verband* #19, July 1999, pp.16-17

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#### Anhang mit Bildmaterial zum Geschwader Bongart



Zwei teilzerstörte Maschinen des Typs Reggiane 2002, die beim Geschwader Bongart geflogen wurden.



Einen am Boden zerstörte Reggiane 2002